

A joyful musical feast

Hamentaschen serves up tangos, polkas, improvised laments

By **STEPHEN PEDERSEN**
Arts Reporter

Halifax klezmer band Hamentaschen gave a delighted audience at the Moed Gallery a taste of wild abandon and sweet tarts Wednesday night.

The musicians, saxophonist Dani Oore, keyboard/accordionist Sageev Oore, bassist Adam Fine and drummer Doug Cameron demonstrated the wild excitement and celebratory ecstasy klezmer music excites in players and listeners alike.

A tray of traditional sweet tarts called hamentaschen, prepared in celebration of Purim, gave the band its name. Based on Jewish folk music melodies (think Fiddler on the Roof), Hamentaschen (the band) played tangos and polkas, improvised laments based on Roumanian doina (think '70s pan flutist Gheorghe Zamfir), free-form preludes and songs.

The music calls for exuberance and nothing could be more ebullient, elated and effervescent than Dani Oore, an unpredictable improviser who inserts yells, honks and squeals and leaps into the air as the spirit moves him.

Contrast that with Adam Fine, whose physical manner is stillness epitomized, but whose fingers dance wildly on the strings while his bass sounds a prolific gamut of sound from oom-pah to fiery cadenzas jammed with hundreds of notes.

Sageev Oore sagely underpins all this mayhem with harmony and rhythmic pulses from the accordion, or, as in one remarkable lullaby, improvises a gentle fantasy of bells and sparkling tones from the keyboard of his ancient Fender Rhodes.

Cameron's role is less flamboyant in



Sax player Dani Oore, shown in November 2004, is an unpredictable improviser who inserts yells, honks and squeals and leaps into the air as the spirit moves him. He played as part of Hamentaschen on Wednesday night at Moed. (File)

this style, but he also augmented his straightforward time-keeping with cascades of drumming by way of his fingertips and bare hands on the drumhead.

Even at its most wrenching, when the melody players wrung the harmonic minor intervals with painful insistence, the music never failed after a

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while to transform itself into a wildly liberating joyfulness. The sound is so immediate, so direct that unseen dancers whirling and whipping their arms and legs around, all but pop out of empty space to join the fun.

The virtuosity of Dani Oore playing alto sax for the first time in a long while, rather than his habitual tenor, as well as the tiny, barking and squealing soprano, expresses an ease of playing long gone beyond technique where the instrument becomes as natural to him as his voice.

Apart from gypsy cadenzas and party polkas, Oore inflected many of his phrases with pure jazz style — as also did Fine, and to a lesser extent, limited somewhat to the boundaries of the possible on accordion, brother Sageev, whose thoughtful explorations on Rhodes of some of the more poetic songs added a deeper colour to the Hamentaschen style.

Passersby on Spring Garden Road this summer and early fall heard a taste of Dani Oore's klezmer as he often sat cross-legged on the grass at the corner at Birmingham Street and not so much busked as practised his soprano — much more freeing than the shut-in confines of a practice studio — not only for him, but for those who smiled as they walked by.

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